

# CHINA SLAMS U.S. OVER TIBET BILL, S. CHINA SEA 'TRESPASS'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The United States and China on Tuesday sparred over Tibet and the South China Sea, with new moves from Washington marking the start of the last month of President Donald Trump in office fuelling fresh tensions in an already fraught relationship.

On Tuesday, China hit out at the U.S. for passing the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA), a landmark legislation that calls for the opening of a U.S. consulate in Lhasa and also underlines U.S. backing for the Dalai Lama to determine his successor.

The Act said such decisions “should be made by the appropriate religious authorities within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition” with the “wishes of the 14th Dalai Lama... [playing] a determinative role”, and described “interference” in the succession by China as “a clear violation of the fundamental religious freedoms for Tibetan Buddhists and the Tibetan people”.

With the Act, the U.S. will back the choice made by the Dalai Lama, even as China has made clear it would anoint its own successor, just as it did by naming its own 11th Panchen Lama in 1995 as Gyancañ Norbu, rejecting the Dalai Lama-backed candidate, Gedhun Choekyi Nima, aged six at the time, who has not been seen in public since.

China said it “resolutely opposes” the “adoption of Bills containing such ill contents on China”.

“Issues related to Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong concern China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They are China's internal affairs that allow no foreign interference,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

“The Chinese government is determined in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests. We urge the U.S. to stop meddling in our domestic affairs under those pretexts, refrain from signing the bills or implementing the negative contents and items in them that target China and undercut China's interests, so as to avoid further damaging overall China-U.S. cooperation and bilateral relations.”

## **‘Momentous landmark’**

The passing of the TPSA, which will have to be signed into law by Mr. Trump, was welcomed by the “government-in-exile” in Dharamsala and its leader or Sikyong Lobsang Sangay, who described it as “a momentous landmark for the Tibetan people” and said “by passing the TPSA, Congress has sent its message loud and clear that Tibet remains a priority for the U.S”.

China also slammed new moves by the Trump administration to add 58 Chinese companies to a list of firms that it says have links to the Chinese military and to restrict visas for Chinese officials linked with human rights abuses.

“The U.S. has been abusing state power and national security concept to suppress and contain certain foreign companies by applying measures such as export control,” Mr. Wang said, adding that the U.S. was “weaponising its visa policy to impose various visa sanctions on Chinese individuals citing so-called issues related to Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet, religion and human

rights”.

## Naval dispute

Both sides also clashed over the South China Sea, with the Chinese military on Tuesday saying it had “warned” a U.S. destroyer sailing in waters off the disputed Spratly islands (called Nansha by China).

“On December 22, the US guided missile destroyer *USS John S. McCain* trespassed into the waters adjacent to China’s Nansha islands and reefs without Chinese government’s permission, and the naval and aerial forces of the Chinese PLA Southern Theater Command conducted whole-process tracking and monitoring on the U.S. destroyer and warned it off,” said Air Force Senior Colonel Tian Junli, spokesperson for the PLA Southern Theater Command, accusing the U.S. of “seriously violating China’s sovereignty and security, and gravely undermining peace and stability in the South China Sea”.

This was the ninth freedom of navigation operation conducted this year by the U.S., the most in the past five years, according to South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, a Beijing-based think tank, reported the Communist Party-run *Global Times* .

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***Wang Wenbin***

***Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson***

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